



Chief Reader Report on Student Responses: 2025 AP[®] African American Studies Set 2 Free-Response Questions

• Number of Students Scored	21,480		
• Number of Readers	136		
• Score Distribution	Exam Score	N	%At
	5	3,707	17.3
	4	6,979	32.5
	3	6,294	29.3
	2	3,420	15.9
	1	1,080	5.0
• Global Mean	3.41		

The following comments on the 2025 free-response questions for AP[®] African American Studies were written by the Chief Reader, Teresa Reed, Professor of Music, University of Louisville. They give an overview of each free-response question and of how students performed on the question, including typical student errors. General comments regarding the skills and content that students frequently have the most problems with are included. Some suggestions for improving student preparation in these areas are also provided. Teachers are encouraged to attend a College Board workshop to learn strategies for improving student performance in specific areas.

Question 1

Task: Free-response question with text-based stimulus

Topic: James Weldon Johnson, “Race, Prejudice and the Negro Artist,” 1928

Max Points: 4

	Max Points:	Mean Score:
Part A	1	.74
Part B	1	.76
Part C	1	.45
Part D	1	.74
Overall Mean Score: 2.70		

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

Responses to this four-part question were expected to demonstrate an understanding of the role of African American cultural expression—including art, literature, and music—in challenging racism and promoting racial pride.

Responses to FRQ1, part A, were expected to describe one example of a specific African American cultural production (art, literature, or music) that challenged racial barriers or stereotypes.

Responses to FRQ1, part B, were expected to explain how James Weldon Johnson’s ideas in the excerpt reflect the goals and values of the New Negro movement.

Responses to FRQ1, part C, were expected to explain how a specific nineteenth-century African American leader or activist advocated for racial uplift.

Responses to FRQ1, part D, were expected to describe one way that either the Black Arts movement or the Black is Beautiful movement contributed to racial uplift in the twentieth or twenty-first century.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?

Responses demonstrated skills in the following categories:

Skill Category 1: Applying Disciplinary Knowledge

Skill Category 2: Source Analysis

Skill Category 3: Argumentation

Responses demonstrated knowledge of significant events, movements, and figures in African American history, including the Harlem Renaissance, the New Negro movement, the Black Arts movement, and Black is Beautiful movement. However, some responses struggled to recognize the time period(s) signaled in the prompt(s), or to provide answers that addressed all parts of each of the questions.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
Providing truncated responses that addressed only a portion of the prompt. This response to part A references the blues, but does not go further to describe how the blues challenged racial barriers or stereotypes: “One example of African American art is the blues. The blues is music that inspired other music like jazz. The blues was a key point in African American history.”	Successful responses addressed all parts of the prompt. For example, strong responses to part A both referenced an artistic, literary, or musical work and also described how that work challenged racial barriers or stereotypes: “Zora Neale Hurston’s “Their Eyes Were Watching God” was a literary book that challenged the racist stereotype that African American women were lazy, inferior, and incapable of success. In this book, Hurston writes about a female protagonist that is independent and strong despite racial barriers and racism and sexism that persists in society. This female character goes on a journey of self empowerment to further her pride in her Black identity and her success. This book, by showing a strong, independent female lead, challenges the racist notion many White Americans had that Black people (especially Black women) had to be reliant on someone because they were too lazy, too stupid, or too untalented to succeed on their own.”
Providing a superficial analysis, or providing mere quotes instead of explanations. Unsuccessful responses to part B fell short of explaining the connection between James Weldon Johnson’s thoughts as expressed in the excerpt and the principles of the New Negro movement. Instead, these responses tended to simply provide verbatim quotes from the excerpt, (e.g., “James Weldon Johnson stated that a new approach depends more upon what the Negro himself does than upon what someone else does for him.”)	Successful responses observed the task verb <i>explain</i> by providing specific evidence and information about the relationship between James Weldon Johnson’s thoughts and the New Negro movement: “The author’s opinion reflects a principle of the New Negro Movement because the movement focused on African Americans defying past misconceptions and creating a new black identity. The author conveys this message by explaining how a newer approach is being used by exchanging the old for the new. Both emphasize that African American art has been prevalent for ages, but this movement is putting an importance on the artist behind the canvas.”

Misunderstanding and/or disregarding the time period signaled in the prompt. Unsuccessful responses to part C tended to cite historical figures that were mismatched to the century noted in the question: “An African American activist who advocated for racial uplift in the nineteenth century was Rosa Parks for the Bus Boycott. This was a racial uplift because she decided to not give up her seat.”	Successful responses conveyed historically accurate information correctly matched to the time period signaled in the prompt: “W.E.B DuBois was an African American leader who advocated for racial uplift by emphasizing the importance of equality. He graduated from Harvard and published his first writings in the late 1800s. He focused on African Americans gaining immediate equality through education.”
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Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam?

- Review major themes, movements, and figures in African American history across time periods**, such as Reconstruction, the New Negro movement, the Civil Rights movement, and contemporary activism.
- Teach students to contextualize important cultural and social** movements in African American history.
- Provide graphic organizers or timelines** to help students distinguish time periods, people, and purposes of important historical movements.
- Teach students how to analyze primary and secondary sources** using historical thinking skills like sourcing, contextualization, and comparison.
- Stress the importance of grounding arguments in specific, accurate historical evidence** rather than vague generalizations. For example, when describing African American art that challenged stereotypes (part A), students should reference a specific poem by Langston Hughes or an artwork by Aaron Douglas, rather than broadly saying “Black artists fought racism.”
- Stress clarity and structure in writing.** Teach students to organize responses around a clear thesis and support it with well-developed paragraphs. In responding to part B, for example, students should begin with a clear sentence like “Johnson’s emphasis on cultural achievement reflects the New Negro principle of self-definition through art.”
- Create opportunities for students to engage with interdisciplinary materials**—literature, music, art, film—to build richer connections and deeper content knowledge. For example, have students compare excerpts from Johnson and Hughes, and visual art from the Harlem Renaissance to show how artists collectively shaped the New Negro identity.
- Practice answering free-response questions under timed conditions**, with a focus on directly answering the prompt, using evidence, and developing coherent historical arguments. Provide feedback on whether they clearly described an example (A), explained the connection to a movement (B), used a historical figure accurately (C), and connected to later movements (D).

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- The Course and Exam Description provides an “Instructional Approaches” section on pages 311–332. This section provides instructional strategies and sample activities for incorporating the course skills into classroom instruction.

- Additional resources may be found on the AP African American Studies on AP Central at: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-african-american-studies>
- Sign into AP Classroom to access AP Videos and questions on the topics and skills addressed in this question. AP teachers can assign students short AP Videos as homework, warm-ups, lectures, reviews, and more.
- AP teachers can also use the AP Question Bank in AP Classroom to enable students to practice and get feedback on formative topic questions and past AP Exam questions.
- The AP African American Studies Online Teaching Community (OTC) is another great resource, which includes materials and resources posted not only by the College Board, but also by other teachers. The OTC Discussion Board is the place to ask questions, share resources, and exchange teaching ideas at: <https://apcommunity.collegeboard.org/communities/community-home?CommunityKey=9a0b3fd3-1786-408a-934a-0189f5e8e645>

Question 2

Task: Free-response question with visual stimulus

Topic: Image from the Ethiopian Bible, ca 1700

Max Points: 3

	Max Points:	Mean Score:
Part A	1	.46
Part B	1	.66
Part C	1	.45
Overall Mean Score: 1.57		

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

Responses to this three-part question were expected to describe and explain how the image of the Annunciation to Zechariah from the Ethiopian Bible represents the relationship between Christianity and early African societies. Responses were also to address how religions outside of Africa impacted both Africa and the African diaspora.

Responses to FRQ2, part A, were expected to describe one way the image serves as evidence of Christianity in early African societies.

Responses to FRQ2, part B, were expected to describe an effect religions from outside of West Africa had on West African societies prior to the seventeenth century.

Responses to FRQ2, part C, were expected to explain one reason why syncretic spiritual practices developed in the African diaspora.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?

Responses demonstrated skills in the following categories:

Skill Category 1: Applying disciplinary knowledge

Skill Category 2: Source analysis

Responses showcased a broad range of skill mastery and disciplinary knowledge. Successful responses to part A demonstrated strong source analysis by accurately describing how Christian iconography, such as crosses, halos, and censers, served as evidence of Christianity in early African societies. Successful responses to part B described the effects that religions from outside West Africa had on West African societies like the Mali Empire and the Kingdom of Kongo prior to the seventeenth century. Examples include Mali's rulers' conversion to Islam, which expanded trade and established Mali as a center of learning; and the Kingdom of Kongo's conversion to Christianity, which strengthened trade with the Portuguese and influenced Christian naming practices; and in both cases, these foreign religions blended with Indigenous beliefs, creating syncretic religious traditions. Successful responses to part C explained that syncretic spiritual practices in the African diaspora helped preserve African identity, maintain community bonds, and provide spiritual strength.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrated Understanding</i>
Providing a superficial analysis of the image (e.g., merely describing the caption below the image) instead of the image itself. Unsuccessful responses to part A provided superficial analyses of the image (“two individuals look at each other” or “the individuals in the drawing aren’t white”) or paraphrased the caption at the bottom of the image (“the Bible written in an early African script of Ge’ez”).	Successful responses noted specific evidence within the image that demonstrated the presence of Christianity in early African societies: “One way the image serves as evidence of Christianity in Early African societies is through the imagery within the piece. There are symbols within the art that show evidence of Christianity. The most blatant of these symbols would be the crosses on the staffs that both of the figures are holding. Crosses are a very common symbol of Christianity. Also, both of the figures have halos above their heads, which is another symbol of Christianity. The presence of crosses and halos within this artwork is evidence of Christianity being prevalent in African societies.”
Misunderstanding or disregarding the time period and/or geography signaled in the prompt. Unsuccessful responses to part B disregarded the time period cited in the prompt (“religions outside of West Africa effected west Africa through colonization in the 1800s”) or described religious influences in East Africa (“the creation of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, which blends elements of Christianity with indigenous Ethiopian religions”).	Successful responses accurately conveyed specific and accurate information about pre-seventeenth century West African empires: “One effect that religion from outside of West African had on West Africa is demonstrated by the prevalence and importance of Islam in the Mali empire. During the era of the Mali empire, one of the early Sudanic Empires, the religion of Islam spread from Arabia to West Africa through trade routes across the Sahara. Leaders and people of the empire voluntarily adopted Islam as the main religion, demonstrated by the construction of Mosques and historical knowledge of the Islamic and learning centers of Timbuktu. The most notable leader of the Mali empire, Mansa Musa, was the most prevalent demonstration of this spread of Islam as his Hajj (Holy journey to Mecca in Islam) was thoroughly documented.”
Describing the process of religious syncretism rather than explaining the reasons and conditions that led to its widespread occurrence within the African diaspora. An unsuccessful response to part C merely described religious syncretism in Africa, but fell	Successful responses explained historical, social, or cultural factors that caused syncretism to occur throughout the African diaspora: “In the African diaspora, many enslaved individuals retained indigenous African traditions as a form of resistance to assimilation and also used aspects of

short of explaining why religious syncretism occurred in the African diaspora: “Christianity and Islam are both examples of religions that were introduced in Africa. As new beliefs came to African societies, people began to adapt these religions so they could work with their own beliefs, and eventually syncretic practices developed as they merged two religions.”	their cultures to communicate and plan escapes. Such traditions existed throughout the African diaspora, because all throughout the west African coast, enslavers kidnapped people from these societies, carrying over their belief systems to the United States and to Latin American nations, like Brazil.”
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Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam?

- **Teach periodization.** Utilize the Essential Knowledge statements in the Course and Exam Description to help students organize content and remind students to place events and people in their correct time frames. Emphasize the chronological progression of events (e.g., the characteristics of West African societies *before* the 17th century versus the impact on West African societies *after* colonization), ensuring they can reference or discuss historical figures, events, and patterns with chronological accuracy.
- **Practice prompt deconstruction skills.** Help students break down each part of a writing prompt, noting the task verbs (like *describe* versus *explain*), time period, geographic scope, and the skills being assessed in the prompt.
- **Practice source analysis skills.** Dedicate time to discussing visual and written sources, their historical contexts, specific features, and meanings. Give students ample practice in articulating how these sources connect to the topic or unit content, thereby strengthening their ability to produce well-supported and precise analytical responses.
- **Teach themes.** Create meaningful connections across units by continually revisiting the recurring course themes: migration and the African Diaspora; intersections of identity; creativity, expression, and the arts; and resistance and resilience. Ongoing exploration of these themes will help to integrate the course material across all units and will better equip students to address the “why” behind historical developments.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- The Course and Exam Description provides an “Instructional Approaches” section on pages 311–332. This section provides instructional strategies and sample activities for incorporating the course skills into classroom instruction.
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Question 3

Task: Free-response question (non-stimulus)

Topic: African American Freedom Struggle pre-1865

Max Points: 3

	Max Points:	Mean Score:
Part A	1	.49
Part B	1	.27
Part C	1	.32
Overall Mean Score: 1.08		

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

Responses to this three-part question were expected to demonstrate understanding of the limitations placed on free Afro-descendant people prior to 1865 and the strategies they used both to increase autonomy and to advocate for change.

Responses to FRQ3, part A, were expected to describe one way the rights of free African Americans were limited prior to 1865.

Responses to FRQ3, part B, were expected to describe an example of a maroon society that contributed to Black and African American autonomy in the eighteenth and/or nineteenth centuries.

Responses to FRQ3, part C, were expected to provide a specific example and explain how African Americans advocated for change in the first half of the twentieth century.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?

Responses demonstrated skills in the following category:

Skill Category 1: Applying Disciplinary Knowledge

Overall, the responses demonstrated an understanding of the limitations on African American rights prior to 1865, as well as the strategies used to fight for equality. However, some responses failed to convey adequate detail, relevance, or chronological accuracy. Many responses to part A cited accurate information about slavery and slave codes but disregarded that the question was related to the rights of free African Americans prior to 1865. Responses to part B generally demonstrated understanding of maroon societies, but many responses struggled to provide adequate detail describing the contributions of a particular maroon society. Responses to part C explained how African Americans advocated for change in the first half of the twentieth century by referencing a range of topics from the course content (e.g., the New Negro movement, the Harlem Renaissance, the Great Migration, the Universal Negro Improvement Association, the *Négritude* and *Negrismo* movements, Black participation in WWII and the Double V Campaign).

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps	Responses that Demonstrate Understanding
Disregarding the time period signaled in the prompt. Unsuccessful responses to part A, cited limitations to African American rights <i>after</i> 1865, rather than <i>before</i> 1865 as required by the prompt: “One major way African Americans were limited after slavery was abolished was through segregation. Segregation was when people in the southern states were separated based on skin color.” Similarly, unsuccessful responses to part C, cited examples from the <i>second half</i> of the twentieth century, rather than from the <i>first half</i> of the twentieth century as required by the prompt.	Successful responses observed the time period signaled in the prompt. Successful responses to part A described how the rights of free African Americans were limited prior to 1865: “One way the rights of free African Americans was limited prior to 1865 was that they often couldn’t vote. Because the free blacks couldn’t vote that vastly limited their rights because they couldn’t speak out and express themselves and their values.”
Disregarding qualifying terms in the prompt. This response failed to see the qualifier “<i>free</i> African Americans.” Consequently, the response incorrectly focused on enslaved African Americans: “One way the rights of African Americans were limited prior to 1865 was the disconnection of family during enslavement. Slave owners would not care if enslaved families were disconnected so they sold their children, mothers, and fathers, sending them far from their families, ending that connection between blood.”	Successful responses answered all parts of the prompt, carefully observing key descriptors and qualifying terms to arrive at a correct answer: “One of the ways that free African Americans were limited prior to 1865 is the Fugitive Slave Act. This is the act where if they spotted any free escaped slave in the north they can take them back to their old owners.”
Providing vague rather than specific information. Unsuccessful responses to part B defined <i>maroon societies</i> in general but did not describe, with specificity, any particular maroon society distinguished by geographical location, time period, or other identifiers:	Successful responses provided descriptions with specificity: “One maroon society that contributed to Black and African American autonomy in the 18th an 19th centuries can be seen in the maroons located in the swamps alongside the Carolinas. In these swamps African Americans were able to create communities

“An example of a maroon society that contributed to African American autonomy in the eighteenth century was during enslavement. They gathered escaped enslaved men and women and created small villages and communities”	for themselves and provide a place for blacks to escape slavery and live freely.”
• Providing historically inaccurate information. An error seen in some responses to part B was the characterization of the Haitian Revolution as a maroon society. Although maroons played a role in the Haitian Revolution, a conflation of the two is historically inaccurate: “The Haitian revolution contributed to Black autonomy as the enslaved Haitians successfully overthrew the colonial rule and obtained freedom.”	• Successful responses provided accurate and relevant information that addressed the prompt: “The Jamaican maroon communities resisted European attacks and managed to negotiate their freedom from England. They were self-sufficient and took in runaway slaves.”
• Ignoring the task verb <i>explain</i>. Unsuccessful responses to part C vaguely or generally mentioned “protests” or referenced the NAACP without explaining how the actions of the protestors or the NAACP advocated for change: “African Americans advocated by protesting. You see much political matters around this time, as blacks looked for help in the community through major court cases in search of help and opportunity.”	• Successful responses observed the task verb <i>explain</i> by providing information about how or why an outcome occurred, using evidence and/or reasoning: “African Americans advocated for change in the first half of the twentieth century through the establishment of HBCUs, or historically black colleges and universities. Jim Crow laws established “separate but equal” doctrine, but it was never truly equal. The schools designated for black communities always recieved less funding and resources. To advocate for change, there was a rise in historically black colleges, so that African Americans could recieve the education they deserved and therefore be better equipped to advocate for themselves, have a community to help them and get employment.”

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam

- **Teach combinations of topics whenever possible.** Then, have students practice reasoning skills such as comparison and change or continuity across time or geography. Provide opportunities for students to use these reasoning skills on sources from different topics throughout the course.
- **Stress the importance of carefully reading the prompts** for free response questions, noticing all qualifying terms.
- **Stress the importance of the task verbs *describe* and *explain*.**
- **Review periodization at the end of each unit.** Build upon the important chronological “markers” by highlighting the significant events as students transition from one unit to the next.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- The Course and Exam Description provides an “Instructional Approaches” section on pages 311–332. This section provides instructional strategies and sample activities for incorporating the course skills into classroom instruction.
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Question 4

Task: Document-based question

Topic: Twentieth-century Migrations and Black Communities

Max Points: 7

	Max Points:	Mean Score:
Thesis/Claim	1	.78
Context	1	.48
Evidence from Sources	2	1.07
Evidence Beyond Sources	1	.37
Source Use	1	.18
Reasoning	1	.42
Overall Mean Score: 3.30		

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

Responses to the DBQ were expected to demonstrate an understanding of how twentieth-century migrations have shaped Black communities in the United States. Specifically, the responses were expected to demonstrate the ability to (1) formulate a defensible claim, (2) provide historical context relevant to the prompt, (3) support an argument using at least three sources, (4) support the argument with evidence beyond the sources, (5) for at least two sources, describe perspective, purpose, context and/or audience relevant to an argument, (6) demonstrate the use of reasoning, and (7) explain the relevance of a source's point of view, purpose, situation, and/or audience through elaboration.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?

Responses demonstrated skills in the following category:

Skill Category 3: Argumentation

Many responses demonstrated understanding of the Great Migration and its impact on Black communities, and most effectively contextualized the Great Migration by describing the historical developments that led to it. Responses were generally less successful at describing historical context surrounding Afro-Caribbean migration patterns. Responses were generally able to identify the correct context, audience, purpose, and/or point of view for 4 out of 5 sources. Responses were generally able to demonstrate understanding of Source 1 (the Claude McKay reading) and Source 3 (the Alain Locke excerpt) and used that understanding for analysis and argumentation. Responses largely misinterpreted Source 2 (the editorial letter in the *Messenger*) and Source 4 (the bar graph showing the foreign-born percentage of the Black population). Some responses inaccurately concluded from Source 2 that African Americans who stayed in the South during the Great Migration successfully negotiated higher wages due to lack of labor. Some responses misread Source 4, assuming the bar graph to depict American-born rather than foreign-born people of African descent in the United States. Furthermore, responses that were able to accurately describe Source 4 often struggled to use that source in support of an argument. Responses struggled to utilize Source 5 (the image of Rihanna) in a relevant way.

Most of the responses met the minimum bar for constructing a thesis statement, although some struggled to establish a line of reasoning. Many responses, although well written and detailed, failed to earn the point(s)

for evidence from the sources either because the response neglected to address the prompt or neglected to address each source individually. Many responses correctly identified the context, audience, purpose, or point of view, but were unsuccessful at connecting those observations to the argument. The reasoning point is built around three historical thinking skills: causation, comparison, and continuity/change over time or geography. Responses that successfully demonstrated reasoning skill cited *causation* most frequently. Few responses successfully compared the Great Migration to the Afro-Caribbean migration. Responses also struggled to integrate Sources 4 and 5 with the other sources to address the prompt.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
Providing overgeneralized context. Unsuccessful responses provided a context that was so broad and nonspecific that a line of reasoning was difficult to identify: “In the twentieth century black communities were shaped by migrations. Mothers and fathers first moved to America in search of a better life. They found racism and prejudice and people driven with hate. Their sons and daughters of future generations had to fight for their right to exist as equal to white people.”	Successful responses provided context that was sufficiently detailed to set the stage for an evidence-based argument: “During the 20th century, many Black communities were facing the harsh realities of the Jim Crow south. Poll taxes and literacy tests repressed their political voice. Frequent lynchings heavily limited the opportunities that Black people could take. Life would not be perfect outside of the south, racism was still prevalent and lynchings still occurred, but it would be better. During this time period, new advents in transportation were made, and ultimately the Great Migration of Black Americans from the Jim Crow south to the North and West was made.”
Disregarding the time period signaled in the prompt. Unsuccessful responses cited evidence mismatched to the twentieth century: “Migrations in the 20th century have shaped black communities in the US because by migrating throughout different places things like the Underground Railroad wouldn’t happen.”	Successful responses observed the time period signaled in the prompt and cited chronologically relevant evidence: “Many significant names such as Claude McKay and Marcus Garvey and more have influenced Black communities through history. These people came from Jamaica, a Caribbean island outside of the United States. These men came from their countries to spread their ideas, and in Claude McKay’s case, go to college. Claude McKay came to America to achieve his goal and get his college degree. However, he instead decided to stay in the United States because he “desired to achieve something new, something in the spirit and accent of America” (source 1). This source shows how he came to America and saw the potential and decided to try and do something great. He went on to become an influential poet and activist in America and impacted the Black community in a positive way through his

	words and leadership.”
Using sources ineffectively. The response below does not connect the cited sources to an argument: “For example, Claude McKay’s narrative tells of the desire he had to stay in America from Jamaica because he had a sense of adventure and wanted to achieve something new (source 1). This idea is also seen through Rihanna, an immigrant from Barbados, who was able to sing for veterans in Washington D.C (source 5).”	Successful responses grouped different sources in a way that connected the sources both to each other and to the overall argument: “One way the migrations shaped black communities in the US was that they became new places of creation and expression. Alain Locke wrote about how the New Negro is keenly responsive as an augury of a new democracy in American culture (Doc #3). This shows a creation and expression because the New Negroes are excited for a new way to live and an ability to be able to be beneficial to society. Claude McKay also wrote about how he left his life in Jamaica as a poet and how he wanted to achieve something new (Doc #1). This shows that people really wanted to contribute and help out in society and make a name for themselves.”
Citing irrelevant or off-topic information. Some responses used Source 5 to highlight Rihanna’s musical career, which was irrelevant to the prompt: “Source 5 showcases a prominent black figure in the current day, Rihanna. Rihanna is known for creating excellent music and being a voice for the African American community. She is a figure for what is achievable for the black community.”	Successful responses constructed arguments based upon evidence that was relevant and focused on the prompt: “Source 5, the image of Rihanna, adds to the ideas about immigration and its impact of the Black U.S. community. Immigrations such as Rihanna’s have led to huge contributions to the art or music scene. This creates pride and fame for members of the Black community, and builds off the ideas from McKay and Locke about expression. This source is made to show the scope of immigration’s impact, as some of the most popular artists in the United States come from other countries.”

Based on your experience at the AP® Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam?

- **Teach students to use the language of the prompt when developing their responses.** (This should not be confused with making use of the sources, which may contain dated terms and language.)
- **Practice writing frequently** to build stamina and pacing, especially regarding source use.
- **Practice argumentation skills** over the course of the year to ensure mastery.
- **Stress the use of transition words** in argumentative writing.
- **Teach students to utilize the topic sentence of each paragraph as a point of focus** and to establish source usage.
- **Teach students to utilize the end of a paragraph to connect sources back to the argument.**
- **Model periodization when teaching and reviewing sources.** Help students to differentiate, for example, between the nadir and slavery.
- **Practice reading, understanding, and analyzing sources** and then using those sources to support an argument.
- **Practice developing concise responses that directly address the prompt.** Begin with shorter responses to simpler questions and build the skill(s) over the term of the course.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

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- Sign into AP Classroom to access the “Practice Session: DBQ” video for instruction and guidance.
- AP teachers can also use the AP Question Bank in AP Classroom to enable students to practice and get feedback on formative topic questions and past AP Exam questions.
- The AP African American Studies Online Teaching Community (OTC) is another great resource, which includes materials and resources posted not only by the College Board, but also by other teachers. The OTC Discussion Board is the place to ask questions, share resources, and exchange teaching ideas at: <https://apcommunity.collegeboard.org/communities/community-home?CommunityKey=9a0b3fd3-1786-408a-934a-0189f5e8e645>

Question 5

Task: Reflect on sources used in Individual Student Project

Topic: Explain why one of your sources is more reliable than another

Max Points: 2

Mean Score: .49

Overall Mean Score: .25

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

Responses to the Exam Day Validation question were expected to describe and compare sources used in the Individual Student Project and to explain why one of those sources was more reliable than another source.

To successfully answer this prompt, students needed to know and be able to explain what makes a source reliable. For example, they needed to understand that academic journals, work published by academic institutions, peer-reviewed articles, and articles with citations that could be checked were more reliable than a blog or podcast.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?

Responses demonstrated skills in the following categories:

Skill Category 2: Source Analysis

Skill Category 3: Argumentation

The connections between the course content/curriculum and the response to this question varied, depending on the chosen topic for the project. Some students chose topics directly related to the course content, and others chose topics that explored new subjects in the realm of African American studies. Most responses that attempted the question were able to describe their sources and attempt to explain source reliability. However, some responses failed to directly address the prompt and instead described general attributes of source credibility. Others provided vague or truncated characterizations of the sources cited. Still others described sources used in the project but fell short of providing specific and relevant evidence to support their claim that one source was more reliable than the other.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps	Responses that Demonstrated Understanding
Neglecting to cite specific sources in the response. Unsuccessful responses were written without naming, identifying, or describing any source in particular: “One of my sources was written by a credible person who is well informed about the topic. They have clearly done their research. My sources come from legal documents that have a well spoken reputation. I have sources that are proof of the evidence I am supporting. One is more important to the other because the sources aren’t based on opinion.”	Successful responses named, described, or otherwise identified the sources being compared for reliability: “One of my sources is a direct report from the Tuskegee University about the Tuskegee Experiments. Another source of mine is an interview of Black women in a Youtube video about their opinions on healthcare. The source I am using from the Tuskegee University is more reliable than the interview on Youtube because I was able to research and determine the credibility of the writers of the Tuskegee Experiment report. They also include citations from their research so that I can connect and check the information for accuracy. In the interview, there was no description of the women’s backgrounds and no way for me to check if they were credible. They just gave opinions and touched on topics such as the Tuskegee Experiment, and other historical Black medical experiments. Therefore, their information in the interview is not as reliable than that of the Tuskegee University report.”
Citing a database or website as a source: “My source History.com was more reliable than my other source.”	Successful responses identified specific sources, naming the particular article or publication accessed through a database or website: “The article <i>The Unsung African American Scientists of the Manhattan Project</i> by Farrell Evans, explains how twelve African American physicists helped develop the technology used to create the atomic bomb.”
Disregarding the prompt by describing which source was more useful rather than more reliable: “I found much more useful information from the website of the National Museum of African American History and Culture than my other sources.”	Successful responses observed instructions in the prompt and focused on source reliability rather than source usefulness: “For my course project, I compared two plays from August Wilson’s <i>The Pittsburgh Cycle</i>, or <i>The Century Cycle</i>, to two firsthand accounts from the time period each of the plays were based on. First, I compared <i>Gem of the Ocean</i> by August Wilson, a play about the Transatlantic Slave Trade to <i>The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African</i> by Olaudah Equiano. Next, I compared <i>Joe Turner’s Come and Gone</i> by August Wilson, a play about the Great Migration, to <i>The Migration Series</i> by Jacob

Lawrence, a series of 60 panels of paintings retelling broad experiences of migrants, especially African-Americans, during the Great Migration.

With both of the plays I used by August Wilson being fictionalized, theatrical stories solely based on the past, it is likely they are less reliable than *The Migration Series* and Olaudah Equiano’s narrative because they do not originate from the time periods they are about, and the stories in them are made up ... however, Olaudah Equiano’s narrative is even more reliable than *The Migration Series* because it is his own, autobiographical, firsthand retelling of the experiences that happened to him while he was kidnapped, taken along the Middle Passage, and enslaved. His documentation being this credible (having been his own experiences) makes his narrative more reliable as a source than *Gem of the Ocean*, *Joe Turner’s Come and Gone*, and *The Migration Series*.”

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam?

- **Teach** students how to choose reliable sources.
- **Remind** students to identify their topic in their answer.
- **Teach** students how to select sources with a variety of perspectives.
- **Stress the importance** of the task verbs.
- **Provide** practice opportunities for students to talk and write about their sources.
- **Practice** answering possible exam day validation-style questions.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- The Course and Exam Description provides an “Individual Student Project” section on pages 333–401. This section provides instructional strategies, project plans, rubric, and additional materials for incorporating the Individual Student Project into the course.
- Sign into AP Classroom to access AP Videos about the Individual Student Project.
- The AP African American Studies Online Teaching Community (OTC) is another great resource, which includes materials and resources posted not only by the College Board, but also by other teachers. The OTC Discussion Board is the place to ask questions, share resources, and exchange teaching ideas at: <https://apcommunity.collegeboard.org/communities/community-home?CommunityKey=9a0b3fd3-1786-408a-934a-0189f5e8e645>